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A ROMAN DINNER

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Early in the fall of 1905-6, the Executive Committee of the Classical Club at Lewis Institute began to plan for a Roman dinner to be given in November in a celebration of the *Ludi Plebei*. The unique character of the event as well as the air of mystery veiling all our preparations—for all details were kept entirely secret—aroused the greatest interest not only throughout the school but in the community at large.

At a quarter of seven on the appointed evening, the door connecting the reception room with the mysterious dining-room swung open, and the tricliniarch announced impressively to the one hundred and twenty-five waiting guests, "Cena 'st parata." The procession formed and, as the harp began a stately march, passed into the dining-room, warned by a slave at the door to enter, "Dextro pede."

The sc  ne that met the eye was one not soon to be forgotten. The yellow lights of dozens of Roman lamps and candelabra flickered softly along the polished surface of the tables and over the groups of slaves in their simple Greek kitons, standing as passively in their places as the statues half concealed among the palms. The tables were arranged as three large triclinia with a serving-table in the center of each, the guests sitting around the outside only. Among the ferns and red roses strewn over the tables stood papier mach   donkeys bearing panniers of olives and radishes, which recalled the bronze ass at Trimalchio's feast. At each cover, beside the menu card, done by hand in the capitals of the early empire, there was a place card in the form of either a goose or the Capitoline wolf, inscribed with a Latin quotation.

When all were seated, slaves with silver pitchers, basins, and towels poured water over the hands of the guests in due form, after which the two small pages filled the drinking glasses. The

dinner itself was served with a deliberation and dignity which surprised even those who had planned it all.

The menu had been arranged after weeks of study in all the available literary sources, and was an effort to present within the limitations of our means a typical Roman dinner, "ab ovo ad mala." It consisted of a *gustatio* or appetizer, *fercula* or series of courses, and *mensae secundae*, dessert, the *mulsum* being introduced between the *gustatio* and the *fercula*, while the *Caecubum* and *commisatio* followed the *mensae secundae*.

The *gustatio* consisted, first, of a head lettuce, *lactuca capitata* and eggs, *ova*, arranged to represent a bird's nest salad, dressed with oil and served with radishes, *radices* and bread sticks, *pastilli*; second, hot tomares, which we have reason to believe are the lineal descendants of the Roman *tomacula*, endives, *intuba*, olives, and small rolls; third, oysters, *ostriae Lucrinae* with pilot biscuit, *panis durus*. After each course the slaves removed all the dishes and rubbed the tables with the purple *gausaupes* which they wore in their girdles.

Then again the harp sounded and bowls of *mulsum* were brought in and served, made, except for fermentation, as the Romans made it, of grape juice and honey.

At the conclusion of this course, the slaves retired with the *structores* and tricliniarch, and all awaited with great curiosity the Umbrian boar, which was the *pièce de résistance* of the dinner. At last two pages entered blowing trumpets, and behind them, each bearing on his head a roasted pig, came the *structores* followed by all the retinue, two by two. The procession passed with the utmost dignity around the entire room and then deposited their platters upon the serving-tables where the carving was done with an attempt to imitate the fantastic pantomime recorded of ancient *structores*. With the pork were served beets, turnips, and bread, but, of course, no potatoes.

After the tables had been cleared and rubbed as before, the *mensae secundae* were brought in, consisting of little cakes, *bellaria*, and apples hollowed out and filled, in concession to American taste, with ice cream.

The pages, with chaplets of vine leaves strung the length of

their arms, now entered and the *structor* at each table removing the needed number, proceeded, with his subordinates, to crown the guests under his charge. Then great bowls of *Caecubum* were brought in and the *magister bibendi* at each table crowned the crater with smilax and poured a libation from the *patera*.

While the guests sipped their wine, a quartette of girls in Greek gowns sang two settings of the "First Pythian Ode" of Pindar and the "Hymn to Calliope," and Horace's "*Vides ut alta stet nive candidum Soracte*," was given in Latin. Four brief addresses by representative men regarding the value of the classics to the professional man brought the evening to a happy conclusion.